respectfully provide this Joint Case Management Statement in advance of the Further Case Management Conference scheduled for August 21, 2020.

I. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

The conference will proceed via Zoom and the parties will not appear in person. Anyone who wishes to attend the conference must log in using the information provided by the Court on the public docket.

II. ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED BELOW AND PROPOSED AGENDA

1. Status of Case Filings and Dismissals
2. Case Management Matters
3. 26(f) Report
4. Discovery Status
5. ADR Status

III. STATUS OF CASE FILINGS AND DISMISSALS

To date, 960 cases are pending in this MDL, naming 76 defendants. A list of these

To date, 960 cases are pending in this MDL, naming 76 defendants. A list of these defendants is attached as **Exhibit A**. To date, 810 personal injury cases and 114 government entity cases (including 79 school districts, 19 counties, 1 city, and 15 tribes) have been filed in this MDL. As of August 18, 2020, 42 MDL plaintiffs have voluntarily dismissed their cases (40 personal injury plaintiffs and 2 class plaintiffs).

There are 193 complaints pending in JCCP 5052, which is assigned to Judge Ann I. Jones of the Los Angeles Superior Court as the Coordination Trial Judge. There are 16 defendants named in those cases.

The Parties are also aware of 13 cases filed by state attorneys general, specifically: California, Illinois, Hawaii, New York, North Carolina, Mississippi, Minnesota, Washington D.C., Arizona, Pennsylvania, New Mexico, Massachusetts, and Colorado. Plaintiffs' Liaison Counsel are continuing their outreach to various State Attorneys General to discuss cooperation with this MDL.

#### IV. CASE MANAGEMENT MATTERS

### A. <u>Case Schedule Proposals</u>

The Parties have met and conferred regarding the case schedule but, as of the date of this statement, have been unable to reach agreement. The Parties, however, continue to meet and confer on these issues. In an effort to narrow disputes, the Parties respectfully request they be permitted to submit their joint or competing respective proposals and supporting positions to the Court under a later joint filing on Thursday, August 20, 2020.

### B. <u>Personal Injury Bellwether Proposals</u>

The Parties have met and conferred regarding the bellwether selection proposals in the personal injury cases but, as of the date of this statement, have been unable to reach agreement. The Parties, however, continue to meet and confer on these issues. In an effort to narrow disputes, the Parties respectfully request they be permitted to submit their joint or competing respective proposals and supporting positions to the Court under a later joint filing on Thursday, August 20, 2020

### C. <u>Amendment to ESI Protocol</u>

The Retailer, Distributor, and E-Liquid Defendants have sent a suggested ESI protocol to Plaintiffs. The Parties are continuing to meet and confer regarding these proposed amendments and will submit either competing proposals or an agreed-upon submission by the September CMC.

#### D. Appointment of a Defense Liaison

Defendants have conferred and propose Renee D. Smith and Peter A. Farrell of Kirkland & Ellis LLP to serve as their liaison counsel to coordinate with Plaintiffs on scheduling and other case management matters.

# E. <u>Motion to Dismiss Certain Claims against the Retailer, Distributor, E-Liquid and Director Defendants</u>

<u>Plaintiffs' Position:</u> The Retailer, Distributor, E-Liquid and Director Defendants seek two additional rounds of pleading challenges: they propose filing a motion to dismiss some, but not all, claims in the Amended Master Complaint (Personal Injury) in October 2020, before the Bellwether Pool is selected, and then filing another set of motions targeting the Bellwether

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Plaintiffs later on. Plaintiffs have already agreed to narrow their claims against certain Defendants via stipulation and contend that two additional rounds of pleadings challenges would not be a productive use of the parties' resources and instead propose that any deferred motions to dismiss proceed in one round, after the Bellwether Pool is selected.

As in the first wave, and consistent with the Manual for Complex Litigation section 11.32, Plaintiffs propose that the parties begin with a meet and confer where Defendants identify the scope and purpose of each motion to dismiss, no later than January 7, 2021. Other than the cursory examples below, Plaintiffs are not clear as to what motions each of these Defendant groups seek to bring, nor how resolving those motions on only certain claims would aid the parties in selecting bellwether cases, focusing discovery, or streamlining resolution. Nor do Plaintiffs understand how any contemplated motion to dismiss would turn only on the allegations in the Amended Master Complaint (Personal Injury), without being tethered to the Plaintiffspecific allegations in the Short Form Complaints or to any state's law (as all of the claims are state-law claims). Since discovery against these Defendants will proceed regardless of the precise contours of the complaints, Plaintiffs contend that the parties' and the Court's resources would be best directed at completing that discovery and honing any pleading challenges to the Bellwether Pool, which by definition and design should serve as a barometer for the other claims pending in the MDL.

After the parties confer, Plaintiffs propose that the Bellwether Pool Plaintiffs would have an opportunity to amend their Short Form Complaints—and if necessary the Master Complaint to cure any defect that Defendants identify by January 21, 2021. This step would allow the parties to conserve resources and avoid needless motion practice—especially as discovery will be wellunderway and may provide sufficient factual support to overcome Defendants' purported deficiencies. If nevertheless, Defendants are not satisfied with these amendments, they may move to dismiss the Bellwether Pool plaintiffs' claims, to the extent permitted by the Court, on or before February 5, 2021. Plaintiffs' oppositions would be due on March 1, 2021, Defendants' replies would be due on March 15, 2021, and the Court would hold a hearing on April 1, 2021.

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This proposal should allow the parties and the Court sufficient time to consider the Court's rulings in determining the initial trial selections.

Retailer, Distributor, E-Liquid and <u>Director Defendants' Position</u>: The Newly Named Defendants (Retailer Defendants, Distributor Defendants, Director Defendants, and E-Liquid Defendants) respectfully request the Court set a briefing schedule (proposed schedule below) for motions to dismiss certain claims brought against them. The Newly Named Defendants were added to the MDL after the initial motion to dismiss schedule was negotiated, and many of them were only named in personal injury cases. Hence, the need for a separate motion to dismiss schedule for the personal injury cases was flagged from the beginning of the Newly Named Defendants' involvement.

The Retailer and Distributor Defendants have already met and conferred with Plaintiffs' counsel since they have been involved in the case to understand which claims in the Amended Master Complaint (Personal Injury) Plaintiffs contend apply to them. (See, e.g., ECF No. 551 (May 13, 2020 Joint Case Management Conference Statement) at 6 (discussing that the Retailer and Distributor Defendants are meeting and conferring with Plaintiffs' counsel regarding the sufficiency of claims pleaded against them in the Master Complaint).) Plaintiffs and the Retailer and Distributor Defendants have now reached agreement regarding three claims in the Master Complaint (and underlying Short Form Complaints) that do not apply to these Defendants. That agreement was recently memorialized in a Stipulation. (See ECF No. 875.) There are, however, additional claims which the Newly Named Defendants believe are not properly pleaded against them. The parties' good faith attempts to meet-and-confer regarding the sufficiency of these claims have not resulted in agreement, and thus the Newly Named Defendants seek to move to dismiss these claims now. The additional conferring that Plaintiffs propose would be pointless. They already understand the issue, they cannot plead around it, and the litigation will not be served by moving as to the insufficiency of the Master Complaint as it relates only to the few claims selected as bellwethers when the same defect is present for all the personal injury cases.

The Newly Named Defendants understand Plaintiffs' opposition to any additional motion practice to be threefold. First, Plaintiffs originally suggested in conferrals that the time for

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motions to dismiss has passed because Defendants already filed motions to dismiss on grounds such as federal preemption. However, any prior motion to dismiss pursuant to the federal pleading standards was not ripe because Plaintiffs and the Retailer and Distributor Defendants were still meeting and conferring on these issues. The Retailer and Distributor Defendants were able to resolve some, but not all, issues vis-à-vis the Stipulation. And through these conferrals, Plaintiffs have been on notice for months that the Retailer and Distributor Defendants believe that certain claims—not just the three claims resolved in the Stipulation—were insufficiently pleaded against these Defendants. Plaintiffs have thus long been on notice that the Retailer and Distributor Defendants would seek to move to dismiss some of those claims, particularly because prior Case Management Conference statements make clear that the Retailer and Distributor Defendants were reserving their rights for additional motions. For example, Plaintiffs, the Retailer Defendants, and the Distributor Defendants stated in the May 13, 2020 Joint Case Management Conference Statement that:

Retailer and Distributor Defendants, and Plaintiffs, agree that other motion practice [beyond motions to dismiss regarding preemption

and primary jurisdiction and motions to dismiss regarding directly filed cases] will be deferred until a later date. In addition, the

parties agree that the rights of Retailer and Distributor Defendants with respect to other motion practice are reserved, including, but

not limited to, personal jurisdiction challenges pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(2) in non-directly filed cases, or other challenges or

motions pursuant to Federal Rules 8, 9, or 12.

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Second, Plaintiffs argue that for efficiency purposes, any such motion practice should be deferred until bellwether motion practice. Not so. The Newly Named Defendants' proposal to move to dismiss these claims is more efficient than Plaintiffs' proposal to defer these issues until bellwether motion practice. The Newly Named Defendants are not proposing to file motions based on the state laws of all fifty states or on personal jurisdiction grounds in individual cases. Instead, they agree to reserve their rights as to those motions and move on those grounds as appropriate after bellwether cases have been selected. There are, however, deficiencies that do not turn on a fifty-state survey or an individual Short Form Complaint that are more efficient to address now rather than in a piecemeal fashion later. For example, the Retailer, Distributor, and

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Opening briefs due October 7, 2020

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Plaintiffs' response due November 4, 2020

Reply briefs due November 25, 2020

Finally, Plaintiffs have suggested the Newly Named Defendants should not be allowed to file partial motions to dismiss targeting only some, rather than all, claims. Plaintiffs' argument directly contradicts the federal pleading rules, which require each claim be properly pleaded. Taken to its logical extension, Plaintiffs' argument would eliminate any partial motions to dismiss and never allow courts to narrow the issues before them—which is not desirable in MDL cases or otherwise. See, e.g., Manual for Complex Litigation § 11.32 ("The legal insufficiency of a claim or defense may be raised by motion for failure to state a claim or for partial judgment on the pleadings.") (emphasis added). And motion practice helps the Court to "define and narrow issues" which "avoids later enlargement of issues and expansion or duplication of discovery." *Id.* § 11.32. Moreover, even dismissal of only certain claims is still of significance to the defendants. The claims in a case impact a wide variety of matters, including, for example, the scope of discovery and potential indemnity and insurance coverage. For these Newly Named Defendants, therefore, it is not a matter of mere pleading artifice to have the Court examine the sufficiency of the claims pleaded against them.

Motion practice presents an opportunity to whittle down and refine the issues in this litigation. The Newly Named Defendants are entitled to know the specific claims and allegations brought against them, and Plaintiffs have been on notice for months about concerns regarding the sufficiency of the allegations in the Master Complaint and Short Form Complaints. Accordingly, the Newly Named Defendants respectfully request the Court enter the following motion schedule:

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#### F. Failure to Serve Short Form Complaints

Yesterday, the liaison counsel for the Distributor Defendants notified Co-Lead Counsel that at least 50 plaintiffs have not served short form complaints on at least some of the Retailer and Distributor Defendants within the time prescribed by Rule 4(m). The parties will meet and confer, including investigating any potential issues with email service, and attempt to resolve these concerns before the next status conference. While the parties are hopeful that meeting and conferring will address these service issues, the Newly Named Defendants request the Court dismiss those cases at an appropriate time should these issues not be cured.

#### G. Minor Issues Particular to E-Liquid Defendants

On July 24, 2020, this Court entered an order approving Tyson & Mendes to substitute as counsel for MOTHER MURPHY'S LABORATORIES, INC. and ALTERNATIVE INGREDIENTS, INC. (Dkt. No, 823). Prior counsel for these defendants, J. Alexander Barrett of Hagan Barrett PLLC, had been appointed by this Court as Liaison Counsel for E-Liquid Defendants (Dkt. 808).

With the consent of counsel for all E-Liquid Defendants, as indicated in correspondence to the Court of July 27, 2020 (Dkt. 825), E-Liquid Defendants respectfully request that the minutes from this Case Management Conference appoint Mitchell B. Malachowski of Tyson & Mendes as liaison counsel for the E-Liquid Defendants.

Additionally, after the substitution of counsel referenced above, Tyson & Mendes, in accordance with Case Management Order No. 3 – Direct Filing Order (Dkt. 309), established the email addresses to accept service of process for MOTHER MURPHY'S below LABORATORIES, INC. and ALTERNATIVE INGREDIENTS, INC.:

MOTHER MURPHY'S LABORATORIES, INC.:

- MDL2913\_Service\_MotherMurphysLaboratoriesInc@tysonmendes.com
- ALTERNATIVE INGREDIENTS, INC.:
- MDL2913\_Service\_AlternativeIngredientsInc@tysonmendes.com
- MOTHER MURPHY'S LABORATORIES, INC. and ALTERNATIVE INGREDIENTS,
- INC. respectfully request that the minutes from this Case Management Conference include an

the new service address and ensure adequate notice to all MDL plaintiffs.

counsel for a number of tribes in the MDL, filed a report on a proposed structure and

**Tribal Leadership Subcommittee** 

appropriate order such that service can be made upon these parties using these email address

Plaintiffs will meet and confer with these Defendants to facilitate a seamless transition to

On August 7, 2020, Geoff Strommer, interim Tribal Representative on the PSC and lead

recommended members for the established Tribal Leadership Sub-Committee. In the report, Mr.

Strommer requests the Court appoint four proposed members to serve on the Tribal Leadership

Sub-Committee and to appoint him to serve as the Tribal representative on the PSC on a

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pursuant to Case Management Order No. 3 (Dkt. 309).

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### **V. 26(F) REPORT**

permanent basis.

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Plaintiffs and Defendants continue Rule 26 discussions. Over the past few weeks, the parties had several meet and confer sessions and offer the following report:

### A. <u>Initial Disclosures</u>

Since the July 17 CMC, E-Liquid Defendants and Retailer Defendants Walmart, Chevron and Walgreens each provided Plaintiffs with Rule 26(a)(1)(A) disclosures. Plaintiffs, Eby-Brown, and the Retailer Defendants are continuing to meet and confer regarding supplementing the Initial Disclosures with the production of insurance policy documents, to the extent applicable. The Parties are meeting and conferring on the timing and sequence of service of the class plaintiffs' initial disclosures, as well as potential initial disclosures for the government entity plaintiffs.

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### B. <u>Changes to Default Discovery Limits</u>

The Parties continue to confer regarding changing the default discovery limits to accommodate the scale and complexity of the litigation.

#### VI. DISCOVERY STATUS

Since the July 17 Case Management Conference, discovery-related developments include the following:

### A. <u>Discovery of Plaintiffs</u>

# Personal Injury Plaintiff Fact Sheets

Personal injury plaintiffs have submitted approximately 397 plaintiff fact sheets, and 75 plaintiff fact sheets would have already been due, but have not been submitted pursuant to plaintiffs' requests for requests for extensions of time. Pursuant to CMO #8, JLI has moved to dismiss 47 cases for failure to provide timely Plaintiff Fact Sheets, and Defendants are currently reviewing those fact sheets that have been submitted for potential deficiencies, which will be identified and addressed in accordance with CMO #8, as well.

On August 6, 2020, Judge Corley held a discovery hearing regarding Supplemental Plaintiff Fact Sheets and subsequently issued an order regarding their content. *See* Dkt. No. 854. The Parties have since conferred regarding any necessary amendments to CMO-8 and will file promptly a proposed Amended CMO 8 or seek further guidance from Judge Corley if agreement cannot be reached.

### Government Entity Plaintiff and Defendant Fact Sheets

The Parties have exchanged drafts of proposed fact sheets for the counties and the school districts and Plaintiffs have sent Defendants a proposed defendant fact sheet. The Parties are in the process of working through their differences on these fact sheets in an effort to either reach agreement on them or narrow the issues that should be presented to Judge Corley for resolution. Plaintiffs believe that these initial fact sheets should focus on information critical to the selection of government entity trial bellwethers, so that these bellwethers can be selected by the end of this year and further discovery can commence with respect to these bellwethers. The Government Entity Plaintiffs are willing to discuss providing limited additional information for purposes of case assessment, but note that as this information is not critical for bellwether selection, it can be provided at a later date. Defendants believe that the initial plaintiff fact sheets will provide critical information to the bellwether selection process, but note that "fact sheets can serve multiple purposes," including providing an efficient mechanism to assist the parties and the court in assessing whether certain claims may be candidates for expedited resolution through voluntary withdrawal, dispositive motions, or through a settlement process." See Guidelines & Best

Practices For Large & Mass-Tort MDLs, Bolch Jud. Instit., Duke Law School, 2nd Ed. (Sept. 2018) ("Duke MDL Guidelines") at pg. 10.

#### Class Representative Discovery

On June 19, 2020, JLI served 20 requests for production of documents and 20 interrogatories on the named plaintiffs in the Consolidated Class Action Complaint. The parties continue to confer, and intend to seek guidance from Judge Corley regarding these requests.

#### **B.** <u>Discovery of Defendants</u>

#### JLI

Plaintiffs have served on JLI 390 requests for production of documents and 42 interrogatories (not including subparts). JLI has requested, and Plaintiffs have agreed, to extensions for each set of discovery served to date. JLI has produced approximately 4 million pages of documents into the MDL Document Depository, including re-produced regulatory productions and other materials culled from more than 46 custodians, as well as certain self-select or other collections or reproductions. Pursuant to further discussions with Plaintiffs in the MDL and other litigation, JLI has agreed to add an additional 45 custodians. JLI's production includes approximately 485,000 documents, previously produced to the FTC, including a privilege log and unredacted complaint. Plaintiffs provided modified ESI search terms to JLI on August 5, with JLI to provide a response this week. Plaintiffs have requested "real-time" discussions with JLI counsel and their ESI vendor to facilitate the process and finalize promptly. JLI produced a privilege log on August 10 (for JLI productions 002-004); the parties held a preliminary meet and confer regarding facial issues with the log on August 12.

#### Altria

Altria has confirmed that will produce concurrently in the MDL the FTC productions it intends to make in the coordinated antitrust actions. The MDL Plaintiffs and Altria have exchanged and met and conferred regarding ESI search term proposals. The parties' meet and confer regarding Altria's responses and objections to written discovery is also ongoing, with the parties' most recent discussions having occurred on August 13.

#### Director Defendants

Plaintiffs have reviewed the Director Defendants' responses and objections to written discovery, and sent letters to defense counsel identifying areas for discussion. Plaintiffs also served jurisdictional discovery on JLI on August 5 and Director Defendants on August 7.

#### Retailer, Distributor, and E-Liquid Defendants

Plaintiffs and the Retailer, Distributor, and E-Liquid Defendants have scheduled an August 24 conference to discuss custodian identification and ESI search terms. On August 17, 2020, Plaintiffs served written discovery on the Retailer Defendants.

#### ESI and Technical Issues

Plaintiffs identified about 3,000 documents produced to date that require color versions. Plaintiffs and JLI met and conferred, and JLI produced requested documents on August 14. Plaintiffs have also identified issues regarding non-native redlined documents in production, and approximately 12,000 documents with document error codes. The parties continue to work on resolving these technical issues.

### C. <u>Coordination with JCCP on Discovery</u>

The MDL Plaintiffs are holding weekly calls with JCCP counsel regarding discovery coordination. Defendants appreciate and encourage coordination between the MDL and the JCCP, as detailed by the Joint Coordination Order (CMO # 9, ECF No. 572) and the Deposition Protocol (CMO #10, ECF No. 573).

#### D. <u>Update Regarding Third-Party Subpoenas</u>

Plaintiffs have issued notices of third party subpoenas to more than 140 entities or persons. A number of recipients have produced documents, while negotiations are ongoing with numerous others. Plaintiffs and JLI have continued to meet and confer regarding Plaintiffs' discovery from certain third-parties. The Parties have reached an impasse on aspects of these issues and expect to seek guidance from Judge Corley.

Due to the continuing threat of COVID-19, Plaintiffs respectfully request an extension of the Order temporarily suspending the Rule 45 requirements for service of process for Subpoenas. A proposed order is attached as Exhibit B.

### E. <u>Deposition Protocol and Joint Use of Vendors</u>

The Parties conferred and reached agreement regarding an amended Deposition Protocol, filed on August 18, 2020 (Dkt. 888). Plaintiffs have also reached out to Defendants regarding joint-retention of vendors for remote depositions.

#### VII. ADR STATUS

Pursuant to Civil Local Rule 16-10(d), the Parties report that they continue to confer with Settlement Master Thomas J. Perrelli and cooperate with his recommendations and directives.

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